

# Don't be fooled about immigration

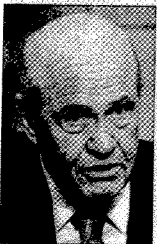
**F**ormer senator and probable Republican presidential candidate Fred Thompson brought Virginia Republicans to their feet last Saturday night in Richmond when he said that the public no longer believes in politicians who promise to secure the U.S. border as part of a bipartisan immigration bill.



**Cal Thomas**

"You've got to secure the border first, before you do anything," said Thompson. "The members (of Congress) say it's right here in this bill: the border."

The response is, "We don't care what's on a piece of paper — secure the border. The piece of paper doesn't secure the border."



**FRED THOMPSON**

Thompson said that the bill now being debated in the Senate is "the same deal" offered in the 1986 amnesty: legalization of aliens in exchange for border security. He said that the public won't be fooled again.

When Thompson speaks of distrusting Washington politicians, he is including Republicans and President Bush, who in recent weeks — in company with members of his administration — have taken to labeling opponents of the bill xenophobes and nativists, even suggesting that some are racists.

Among many reasons to distrust the immigration bill is the failure of the administration to convince the public that it would hold accountable people who break a new law, when it has been lax enforcing existing laws. If illegals refuse, or claim they can't pay the proposed \$5,000 fine to obtain a legal visa, or if they abscond, as many have, will the government then roll out the buses and jets and deport them, along with family members who were either born here or allowed



MIKE LESTER, ROME NEWS-TRIBUNE

to immigrate as part of the "chain migration" that has brought so many in the past?

In a recent interview with *The Wall Street Journal's* Kimberley Strassel, the president again asserted that there will be economic benefits to the country from permitting millions more foreigners to live among us. Strassel writes, "Studies have shown that immigrants add some \$10 billion annually in net economic output." That is misleading.

A new report by The Heritage Foundation says that the American taxpayer pays for tens of billions of dollars in services and other benefits to households of low-skill immigrants, many of them illegal.

Analysts Robert Rector and Christine Kim write that on average, each of these 4.5 million households receives nearly three dollars in taxpayer-financed services for every dollar it pays in taxes. They say that while low-skill immigrants paid an average \$10,573 in taxes in fiscal 2004, they received nearly three times as much — \$30,160 a household — in government benefits and services, for a "fiscal deficit" of \$19,587.

That deficit might be tolerable if it were for a short and fixed term and illegal immigrants were required to learn English, receive a good education and improve their lot beyond manual labor. But the chances of illegal immigrants doing that are equal to politicians telling the truth about the immigration

bill. The Pew Hispanic Center reports that one-third of all foreign-born people in the United States are Mexican and of that number half are illegal. At least half of the adult illegal aliens in the United States lack a high-school diploma, compared to 25 percent of legal immigrants without one.

In the *Wall Street Journal* interview, the president reveals what's really at the heart of the debate: politics. "If people think that a party is against somebody or some group of people, you'll pay a political price for it." He then likened those opposed to the immigration bill to people who once opposed civil rights for blacks. Strassel

links civil-rights opponents to the Republican Party, but the majority party during most of those years was the Democratic Party and the majority of those opposed to civil-rights legislation were Southern Democrats.

If the president thinks that this is about politics, he should open the borders and let anyone come who will come. Why tell any immigrants "no" if they, or their native land, might be offended? Democrats clearly believe that illegals are potential recruits into their party.

If Republicans fall for this crass appeal to import new voters, they will deservedly suffer electoral deportation from what remains of their power. Already, contributions to the GOP by grassroots donors have declined 40 percent, according to *The Washington Times*. They cite the immigration bill as their main reason for reduced donations. This trend will continue if the Washington politicians keep trying to force a bill down the throats of those who don't want it.

Whose country is this? Does it belong to illegal immigrants and politicians, or to the citizens of the United States of America?

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